



MYSTERY WRITER GRAFTON'S SERIES WILL END AT Y

Sue Grafton, a pioneer among female crime fiction writers and author of the bestselling "alphabet" series of mysteries beginning in 1982 with *A Is for Alibi*, died Thursday night. She was 77. **Nation, 9A**

Congressman has big-money backers

Last week, President Donald Trump tweeted his support for U.S. Rep. Ron DeSantis for Florida governor, even though DeSantis has not announced he's running. Now the North Florida Republican is touting a list of several other billionaires supporting him. **Local, 1B**

Excuses fly from charity founder

A marina owner hoped to collect on a debt by taking the founder of Soaring Paws pet transport charity to court. But something as straightforward as getting his day in court has been complicated by a litany of excuses. **Local, 1B**

HSN, QVC under same umbrella

HSN shareholders approved the sale of the iconic home shopping company to QVC's parent company, Liberty Interactive Corp., for \$2.1 billion, which means big changes are coming to the St. Petersburg-based company. **Business, 4B**

Miami gets to prove its status

There's a lot at stake tonight when No. 11 Miami takes on No. 6 Wisconsin in the Orange Bowl. But Hurricanes coach Mark Richt says the most important thing might be showing the team can excel on a big stage. **Sports, 1C**

TODAY'S WEATHER

Mostly sunny

8 a.m. 52° Noon 65° 4 p.m. 67° 8 p.m. 61°

0% chance of rain

More, back page of Sports

tampabay.com

New-look All Eyes

In our All Eyes gallery, you can find the day's top photo, the week's best images and collections of photos from news events. **tampabay.com/photos.**

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Entertainment winners 2017

... and, of course, the losers. **Etc., 2B**

Tampa Bay Times

FLORIDA'S BEST NEWSPAPER



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★★★ SATURDAY, DECEMBER 30, 2017 | \$1

5 workers die. Who pays?

The PSC will decide if Tampa Electric shareholders or customers bear an accident's costs.

BY KATHLEEN MCGRORY AND NEIL BEDI
Times Staff Writers

This week the federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration slammed Tampa Electric for a June accident that killed five workers, hitting the company with a six-figure fine.

Next, the Florida Public Service Commission will decide

whether the accident will have a bigger impact on the company's bottom line.

The PSC has the power to determine what costs, if any, Tampa Electric can pass along to customers after an accident.

Utilities cannot pass along fines imposed by OSHA, but they can recover money spent on additional fuel or replacement power

from other utilities.

Costs that aren't passed along come out of the company's profit margins.

If Tampa Electric tries to recover power or fuel it had to buy because of the accident next year, PSC staffers will examine the "management decisions" leading up to the accident to decide whether cost recovery is appro-

appropriate — or whether the company's shareholders should foot the bill, attorney Keith Hetrick said.

J.R. Kelly, who represents consumer interests in front of the PSC, said his office would challenge any attempts at cost recovery.

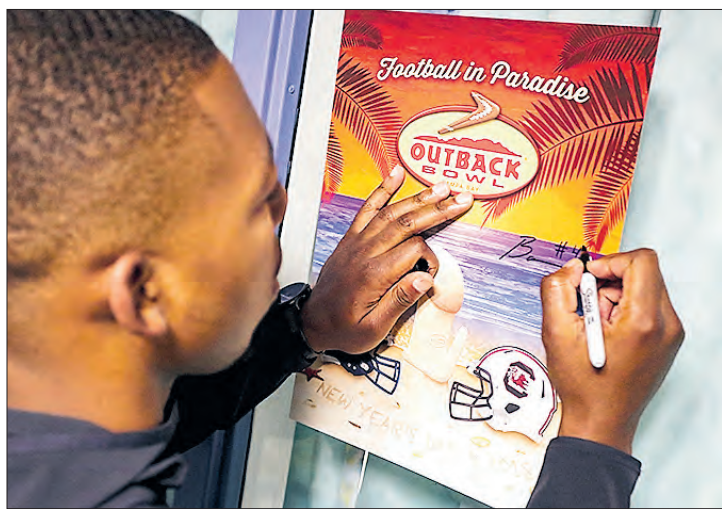
Tampa Electric spokeswoman Cherie Jacobs declined to say how much the company spent

on fuel and power after the accident at Big Bend Power Station in Apollo Beach, or how much it might seek to recover. But she said the company's total purchased power and fuel costs for 2017 were lower than projected, largely because after the accident neighboring utilities had sold power to Tampa Electric at cost.

» See **TECO, 10A**



Photos by MONICA HERNDON | Times



Time out from football for fans

Outback Bowl participants spent time Friday visiting patients at Tampa General Hospital. Above, Reynaldo Herrera, 7, of Dade City receives signed memorabilia from University of South Carolina and University of Michigan football players. At left, Bryson Allen-Williams, a South Carolina linebacker, signs an Outback Bowl poster at the hospital. The Outback Bowl kicks off at noon Monday at Raymond James Stadium in Tampa.

Empty seats represent 1.1M voters

Six Florida legislators will not return for this session, with no time for special elections.

BY JIM TURNER
News Service of Florida

TALLAHASSEE — More than 1.1 million Florida voters won't have a representative in one of the legislative chambers when the 2018 session begins next month.

Resignations and a recent death have created six open seats, with most expected to remain vacant through the 60-day session because of scheduling requirements for special elections.

The vacancies do little to alter

the Republican hold on both chambers, with the GOP up 23-15 in the Senate and 76-40 in the House entering the 2018 session.

But a vacancy can mean additional work for other lawmakers.

More importantly, Aubrey Jewett, a political science professor at the University of Central Florida, said people in districts short of full representation could struggle to see local needs

and funding advanced.

"Some districts have certain issues that are important which may not be pursued at all or pursued with the same vigor," Jewett said. "Every district may have specific issues or projects that they would like funded. In the absence of representation, it is likely they will not get their share of the appropriations pie."

» See **VACANCIES, 9A**

Bucs stick with Koetter

With rampant speculation in a 4-11 year, coach gets good news from the top.

BY RICK STROUD
Times Staff Writer

TAMPA — Based on five straight losses and the 4-11 record, Dirk Koetter had every reason to suspect he may be coaching his last game for the Bucs on Sunday against the New Orleans Saints.

After all, the Glazer family, which owns the team, has averaged the firing (and hiring) of a head coach every two years for the past decade.

But Friday afternoon, general manager Jason Licht walked into Koetter's office to personally deliver the kind of news from the team's owners that Koetter can celebrate on New Year's Eve, win or lose: The Bucs are sticking with their head coach for 2018.

Whether the Bucs believe Koetter, who is 13-18 after two seasons, is the best choice or they simply couldn't find anyone better, remains to be seen.

For several months, Koetter, 58, has had to endure speculation that Jon Gruden, the Bucs' » See **KOETTER, 10A**

The right decision

Columnist Tom Jones weighs in on the Bucs' decision to keep Koetter. **Sports, 1C**



Dirk Koetter, 58, has been head coach of the Bucs for two years.

Shows to light up New Year's Eve

BY SHARON KENNEDY WYNNE
Times Staff Writer

We'll take a cup of kindness, sure, but what we really want to see on New Year's Eve is stuff blown up in a dazzling fireworks show. So here's a quick guide to where you can see fireworks on Sunday night to start the year off with a bang:

• **Downtown St. Petersburg:** As part of its alcohol-free First Night celebration there will be fireworks at 8 p.m. and midnight. It's free to wander around, but buttons get you into activities. \$12-\$15, \$5-\$10 ages 6-12, 5 and younger free. Straub Park at Beach Drive and Fifth Avenue NE, St. Petersburg. (727) 823-8906. firstnightstpete.com.

• **Downtown Tampa:** The city of Tampa moved its countdown this year to Cotanchobee Fort Brooke Park, 601 Old Water St., Tampa. 10 p.m. Sunday. thetampariverwalk.com/fireworks.

• **Clearwater Beach:** Fireworks will be shot off Sand Key in a midnight display that can be seen along all of Clearwater Beach.

» See **FIREWORKS, 10A**



David Piper, salesman for TNT Fireworks, sets up his stand at Tyrone Gardens in St. Petersburg on Friday. The stand is open from noon to 11 p.m. each day through New Year's Eve.

SCOTT KEELER | Times

Nelson: Congress is hurting Puerto Rico

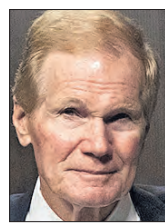
He says the tax bill adds to the island's woes.

BY ANASTASIA DAWSON
Times Staff Writer

TAMPA — It was only a day trip, but it was long enough for U.S. Sen. Bill Nelson to lash Congress for failing to help those in Puerto Rico still suffering from the destruction wrought by Hurricane Maria.

"Puerto Ricans are Americans," he said. "They are U.S. citizens, and a lot of my fellow members of Congress don't understand that."

Florida's senior U.S. senator spoke at a Friday news conference held with Hispanic community leaders at his downtown Tampa office. He delivered a bleak report from his recent trip there with a



Nelson

fellow Democrat, U.S. Rep. Darren Soto of Orlando. They flew out at 6 a.m. Wednesday and returned that night at 9 p.m.

Nelson spoke on the 100th day

since the Category 4 storm struck the island on Sept. 20. Maria's wind speeds of up to 155 mph devastated Puerto Rico's infrastructure

» See **NELSON, 9A**

